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CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS

GUIDELINES FOR NATIONAL SDG INDICATORS REPORTING MECHANISMS

Guidelines for countries to facilitate decisions about reporting approach and the development of NRPs

Prepared by the Task Force on Reporting SDG Indicators Using National Reporting Platforms

This document discusses the reporting of the global SDG indicators from countries to the UN global database. The document aims to assist countries in choosing the reporting model (or models) that best fit their national circumstances and capabilities by describing the possible advantages and disadvantages of several national models including when or if to set up a National Reporting Platform (NRP).

**Abbreviations used in this document:**

CES – Conference of European Statisticians

ECOSOC – United Nations Economic and Social Council

EU – European Union

GIS – Geographic Information System

GPS – Global Positioning System

HLPF – High-level Political Forum

IOs – International Organizations

NRP – National Reporting Platform

NSO – National Statistical Office

NSS – National Statistical System

OECD – Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

SDG – Sustainable Development Goal

SDMX - Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange

SMS – Statistical Metadata System

UN – United Nations

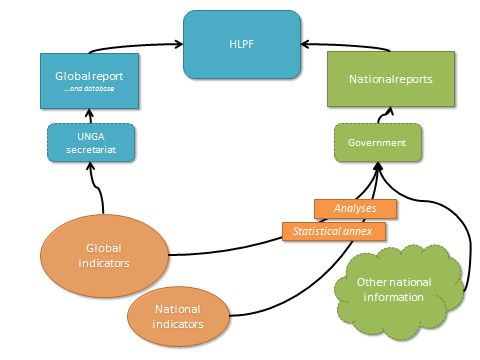
UNGA – United Nations General Assembly

UNECE – United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

UNSD – United Nations Statistics Division

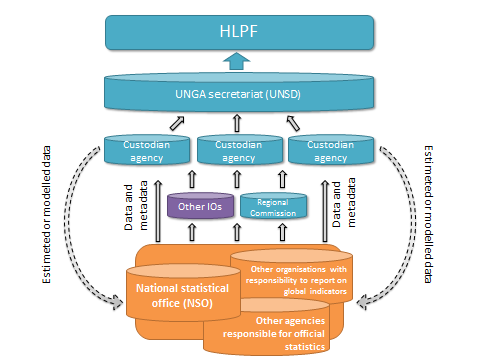
# BACKGROUND

1. With the adoption of the General assembly resolution 70/1. Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the governments of the countries of the United Nations embarked upon a plan to not only *take the bold and transformative steps which are urgently needed to shift the world on to a sustainable and resilient path*[[1]](#footnote-1), but they also committed to assuming the primary responsibility for follow-up and review, at the national, regional and global levels, in relation to the progress made in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets over the coming 15 years. The resolution noted that the SDGs and targets will be followed up and reviewed using a set of global indicators, which will be complemented by indicators at the regional and national levels (para 75).
2. According to the 2030 Agenda, follow-up and review processes at all levels will be “rigorous and based on evidence, informed by country-led evaluations and data which is high-quality, accessible, timely, reliable and disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability and geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.”[[2]](#footnote-2)
3. Additionally, the 2030 Agenda notes that regular voluntary reviews will be conducted in the High-level Political Forum (HLPF), the United Nations central platform for follow-up and review of the SDGs. The reviews will be State-led, involving ministerial and other relevant high-level participants (para 84) and build on regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and subnational levels which are country-led and country-driven. (para 74)
4. Follow-up and review in the HLPF will also be informed by an annual progress report on the SDGs to be prepared by the Secretary-General in cooperation with the UN system, based on the global indicator framework and data produced by national statistical systems and information collected at the regional level.[[3]](#footnote-3) Figure 1 outlines information flows for the reporting requirements to the HLPF. The global indicators and accompanying available statistics will be contained in a database maintained by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD).

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**Figure 1: The major information flows needed to inform the two reporting processes required for the follow-up and review of the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development**

1. The 2030 agenda states that the annual progress report shall be based on the global indicator framework and data produced by national statistical systems and information collected at the regional level. The UN Statistical Commission has also decided that the compilation of global indicators will be based to the greatest extent possible on comparable and standardized national official statistics provided by countries to the international statistical systems and that when other sources and methodologies are used, these will be reviewed and agreed by national statistical authorities and presented in a transparent manner.[[4]](#footnote-4) This document aims to facilitate countries’ decisions about national organisation, reporting approaches and the development of National Reporting Platforms (NRPs) that countries will need to make to satisfy these requirements.
2. Figure 2 describes the major actors involved in the process leading to the provision of the global indicators into the global follow-up and review performed by the HLPF, and includes basic flows of information needed. The basic outline of a reporting model described in figure 2 will be elaborated on and described further in subsequent chapters of the report.



**Figure 2: The major actors involved in the global reporting of SDG indicators, including basic information flows.**

1. The Task Force has prepared this report to assist countries determine the most efficient and effective way, given their national statistical system, of organising national reporting mechanisms from the country viewpoint, to minimize reporting burden and avoid duplication. It should be noted that as the follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is a country-led process, hence the reporting mechanisms should help ensure that those being held accountable are also able to ensure data coherence. The goal is to develop general guidance for the organisation of the reporting of the SDG indicators.
2. To this end, the report describes the actors involved in the production and reporting on SDGs, and the data types that may be used in the reporting of the global indicators to the UN system. It also elaborates on some models that can be applied in their entirety or in part by countries to help National Statistical Offices plan and organise the reporting. Chapter 5 of the report details determinants and arguments to be considered when deciding on the national set-up. The report explains how different national circumstances may call for different decisions to be made regarding the reporting set-up.

# DATA FLOWS: THE ACTORS

## The role of national statistical systems

1. The role of national statistical systems is to collect data according to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, providing robust, impartial data and metadata and producing a comprehensive set of integrated statistics. National statistics systems will be pivotal in reporting progress towards the SDGs, with the 2030 Agenda clearly recognising the importance of country-led evaluations and data to inform follow-up and review processes at all levels.

### National Statistical Offices (NSOs)

1. The primary function of the National Statistical Office (NSO) is to collect, compile and release official statistics that are produced “subject to the principles of reliability, objectivity, relevance, statistical confidentiality, transparency, specificity and proportionality”[[5]](#footnote-5). The Conference of European Statisticians' (CES) Roadmap on statistics for SDGs recommends that NSOs serve as national focal points for the measurement of SDGs, collaborating closely with policy makers so that countries can meet the reporting requirements under the 2030 Agenda in accordance with national priorities.
2. In a report prepared by Statistics Canada for the World Data Forum, they outline a continuum of roles that the NSO can take in the SDG data ecosystem, where the NSO fits along this continuum will be determined by several factors, including government priorities and resource availability – both financial and human in terms of availability and capacity. These roles range from a “full passive approach” where the NSO may supply some of the data and statistics for the measurement of SDGs, but they play no role at all in the provision of non-NSO data. At the other end of the continuum, the NSO may take on a “proactive-custodial” role. The report notes that, “under this approach the NSO takes on a full custodian role for the underlying data of SDG indicators. It provides, quality assurance guides, tools and training. Moreover, it assesses all non-NSO data being used for national measurement with respect to SDG indicators”.
3. Some key elements of the NSO role are summarised below.

**Evaluation and planning**

* Coordinating assessments of readiness to report on the SDG indicators and the identification of data gaps, working closely with national data producers and international organisations. The exact nature of this role will vary according to national circumstances. Countries will assess availability of data for global indicators within their countries, through mapping data providers to statistical (and non-statistical) indicators.
* Planning and proposing data flow models at the national level (whether centralised in one focal point or decentralised). NSOs should evaluate which data flow model best fits their national circumstances and which provides the most transparent and efficient transfer of data from the national to regional and global levels.
* Determining the reporting approach and considering the development of a NRP (or other form of data dissemination) for SDG indicators. NSOs should consider the necessity of setting up a NRP and decide what kind of NRP will meet their needs.

**Role within data flows**

* Deciding on which data flow model to use for reporting progress on SDGs. The CES Roadmap on Statistics for SDGs sets out three schematic models on how data can flow from national to global level:
  + Data Flow Model 1 puts the NSO at the centre, as a coordinator of all SDG data provision, i.e. statistical and non-statistical indicators are gathered by the NSO from all national data providers and are disseminated coherently from one place. This role is linked closely to the maintenance of a NRP; the agency maintaining the platform naturally becomes the coordinator of all SDG data provision.
  + Data Flow Model 2 states that NSOs would only take responsibility for the SDG indicators for which it produces the underlying data, while other organisations would take responsibility for SDG indicators where they are the producers of the underlying data.
  + A third option would be for the NSO to take responsibility for all statistical indicators, while someone else, e.g. a ministry, reports on non-statistical indicators.

### Other national data providers

1. Depending on the data flow model chosen, other national data providers may supply data via the NSO or directly to custodian agencies. All data providers will need to meet some minimum requirements for supplying indicator data. These include:

* Close collaboration with the agency responsible for coordinating national reporting of the global indicators so as to ensure coherence between these data and official statistics
* Source data from official statistics wherever possible
* Assuming the appropriate role in regards to quality assurance and ensuring quality assurance where data are derived from non-official sources
* Provide a time series from 2015 onwards
* Provide basic metadata (e.g. definitions of indicators and data sources)

## The role of international organisations

1. In order to reduce burden on countries, existing structures and mechanisms should be used where appropriate; for a number of SDG indicators data are already collected by international agencies such as Eurostat, the OECD or the World Health Organisation. However, it is important that the countries are in the lead of the process of deciding on the source to be used for the indicators published for their countries.
2. To this end, international organisations are urged to make data and metadata and methods for harmonisations readily available so that NSOs have clear information about their national indicators (and have opportunity to validate indicators published when appropriate).

### Regional commissions

1. The regional mechanisms facilitate, as appropriate, the data and metadata transmission process from the national to the global level. Their roles will vary, but may include:

* Assessing data and statistical gaps in measuring SDGs
* Developing regional indicators to complement the global SDG indicators
* Managing technical cooperation programs for building capacity to report on SDG indicators
* Facilitating the sharing of national experiences of and best practice for reporting statistics for SDGs
* Developing methods, standards and guidance to enhance the quality and comparability of statistics and SDG monitoring

### Custodian agencies

1. Custodian agencies could be responsible for:

* Collecting data in their domains from countries (or regional organizations as appropriate) through existing mandates and reporting mechanisms.
* Ensuring data to be internationally comparable, calculating global and regional aggregates and making them available, along with the accompanying metadata.   
  This may involve using estimates to fill data gaps when country data are missing, and making adjustments to make data comparable where country data has been collected using different methodologies or inconsistent sources.
* Developing internationally agreed standards, coordinating indicator development, and supporting increased adoption and compliance with internationally agreed standards at the national level.
* Strengthening national statistical capacity and improving reporting mechanisms.
* Contributing to annual SDG progress reports and review processes.

1. From the countries’ view-point it is essential that custodian agencies provide full traceability to source data and absolute transparency in how country data have been adjusted or aggregated to. Custodian agencies should proactively make this information available to NSOs to ensure that those being held accountable are also able to ensure data coherence. Custodian agencies should also coordinate and communicate with other international organisations in order to avoid duplicating reports, ensure consistency of data and reduce response burdens on countries[[6]](#footnote-6).

### UN Statistics Division (UNSD)

1. UN Statistics Division (UNSD) makes the internationally comparable country data on each of the indicators available alongside the regional and global aggregates in the SDG indicators global database. This fulfils the need for full transparency and allows data users, including the Member States, to easily access all data on SDGs in one single place, together with the respective metadata.
2. The UNSD can also facilitate the coordination and cooperation between national statistical systems and custodian agencies. The Department for International Development (DFID) sponsored project “country data lab”, where national data is compared against data harmonised at the global level, is an example.

### Other international organisations

1. Other international organisations are taking a keen interest in the 2030 Agenda; and their roles may vary. They may choose to make data available to custodian agencies, and/or they may choose to establish their own indicator framework, according to their own circumstances, to monitor progress towards SDGs.

# DATA FLOWS: THE DATA TYPES

## National official statistics

1. National official statistics include statistical activity carried out within a national statistical system[[7]](#footnote-7), or under the statistical programme of an intergovernmental organisation. National Official Statistics are, by definition, compiled in accordance with the Fundamental Principles for Official Statistics, the European Statistics Code of Practice or a similar authoritative international framework ensuring professional standards.[[8]](#footnote-8) National Official Statistics are considered a public good and provide information on the economic, demographic, social and environmental realms of a society.

## Non-official statistics

1. Non-official statistics are statistics (and data) that are produced outside of the National Statistical System. While data and statistics may originate outside of the NSS, they can potentially be transformed to become official statistics. This occurs when the NSOs validate the sources and processes the data to determine “fit for use”. If the NSO determines these data meet the requirements, once processed, they can become a component of official statistics. There is a significant push for NSOs to use alternative data sources (e.g. big data) to augment the statistics for SDGs and many NSOs are examining different types of non-official data sources to determine if they can be transformed into official statistics.
2. Non-official data and statistics could potentially be used to complement official statistics for some parts of the follow-up and review of the agenda, e.g. where we find gaps in the availability of official statistics, as “place-holders” while official statistics is being developed or for targets where the objectivity of a government agency could potentially be called into question (some targets under goal 16 falls into this category).

## Geospatial data

1. Geospatial data is data that has a geographic component to it.  More specifically, it refers to data that have locational information tied to them such as geographic data in the form of coordinates, address, city, or postal code. Geospatial data can originate from GPS data, satellite imagery, and geo-tagging or GIS. Geospatial data can be part of official statistics or non-official statistics depending upon its origin, production and dissemination.
2. The use of geospatial information in statistics provides opportunities to more easily follow developments on regional and local level, for SDG indicators this is particularly important as it will facilitate the efforts of leaving no one behind.

## Non-statistical data

1. Non-statistical data refer to data where there is no statistical variability. In the 2030 Agenda environment, it refers to the resulting data for indicators that have a yes/no as a response. For example, the existence of laws or regulations in a certain area can be considered a “non-statistical” indicator. Other non-statistical data would result from questions related to the existence of “established and operational policies and procedures…”
2. Because some of the indicators for the 2030 Agenda are non-statistical, NSOs will look to policy makers to compile and potentially report on these indicators. How non-statistical indicators are reported on will depend on the country preferences and decisions. While policy departments may compile the information on non-statistical indicators, they may provide these indicators to the NSO for reporting if the NSO is deemed to be the coordinator of SDG information. In other instances, policy departments may report directly to custodian agencies. How and if non-statistical data are validated will be decided upon based on national circumstances.

## Metadata

1. Metadata can be defined as “data that define and describe other data”, whereas statistical metadata are “data about statistical data, and comprise data and other documentation that describe objects in a formalised way”[[9]](#footnote-9). Some metadata, however, describe other resources that are relevant to the collection, processing and dissemination of data (for example, questionnaires and publications) rather than relating directly to data themselves, so a slightly wider definition of metadata may need to be considered. With this in mind, the SDMX Metadata Common Vocabulary definition of a Statistical Metadata System (SMS) can be used: “A data processing system that uses, stores and produces statistical metadata”. The term system refers to the people, processes and technology involved in managing statistical metadata.

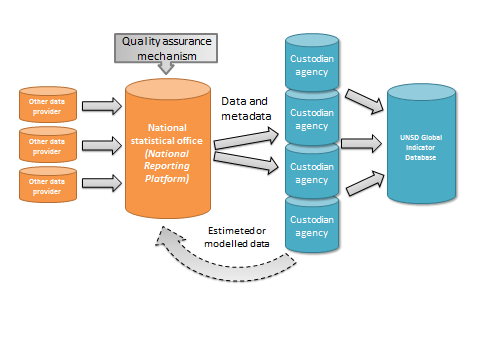
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| STATISTICAL METADATA SYSTEM  The SMS should be a tool enabling a statistical organization to effectively perform the following functions:   1. Planning, designing, implementing and evaluating statistical production processes. 2. Managing, unifying and standardizing workflows and processes. 3. Documenting data collection, storage, evaluation and dissemination. 4. Managing methodological activities, standardizing and documenting concept definitions and classifications. 5. Managing communication with end-users of statistical outputs and gathering of user feedback. 6. Improving the quality of statistical data and transparency of methodologies. Ensuring and evaluating the quality of statistical data is one of the most important activities. To this end, national and international statistical organizations have adopted a set of criteria (relevance and completeness, comparability and coherence of statistical concepts, accuracy of statistical estimations, timeliness and punctuality of delivered statistical information, its accessibility and clarity). The SMS should offer a relevant set of metadata for all of these criteria. 7. Managing statistical data sources and cooperation with respondents. 8. Improving discovery and exchange of data between the statistical organization and its users. 9. Improving integration of statistical information systems with other national information systems. Growing demands to use administrative data for statistical purposes require better integration and sharing of metadata between statistical and administrative bodies, to ensure coherence and consistency of exchanged information. 10. Disseminating statistical information to end users. End users need reliable metadata for searching, navigation, and interpretation of data. Metadata should also be available to assist post-processing of statistical data. 11. Improving integration between national and international organizations. International organizations are increasingly requiring integration of their own metadata with metadata of national statistical organizations in order to make statistical information more comparable and compatible, and to monitor the use of agreed standards. 12. Developing a knowledge base on the processes of statistical information systems, to share knowledge among staff and to minimize the risks related to knowledge loss when staff leave or change functions. 13. Improving administration of statistical information systems, including administration of responsibilities, compliance with legislation, performance and user satisfaction. 14. Facilitating the evaluation of costs and revenues for the statistical organization. 15. Unifying statistical terminology as a vehicle for better communication and understanding between managers, designers, subject-matter statisticians, methodologists, respondents and users of statistical information systems. |

# MODELS FOR NATIONAL REPORTING ON GLOBAL SDG INDICATORS

1. Actors in the national statistical system transmit data to a number of international organisations, on the global level as well as on the regional level. Much of the data used for compiling the global SDG indicators are already provided to the UN-system from the countries. Different transmission models are used, ranging from excel sheets sent out to the countries by the agencies to be filled in and returned, to data being pulled directly from national or regional websites by international organisations.
2. When data are needed from countries, the request is often sent to a focal point in the national agency responsible for the statistical area. It is often the case that the coordinating body, whether in a centralised or a decentralised system, is not aware of what is being collected directly from the unit producing the statistics.
3. Depending on the character of the national statistical system, countries will need to choose a model for how to organise the reporting of the global indicators from the national perspective. Of course, the national policy plays a fundamental role, especially with respect to NSOs. Circumstances and traditions within the countries national statistical systems will determine which model fits best. One country may want to apply a model where all SDG data is channelled through a certain body (usually the NSO) before it is sent on to the custodian agencies. Such a model may benefit from using an NRP so as to facilitate collection, quality assurance and transmissions to the receiving agency. A system where responsibilities for official statistics, including for quality assurance, is dispersed throughout the system, may find that tools for soft coordination will fit the system better.

## Centralised reporting of global SDG indicators

1. Figure 3 shows a centralised model for reporting, including quality assurance mechanisms and an NRP.

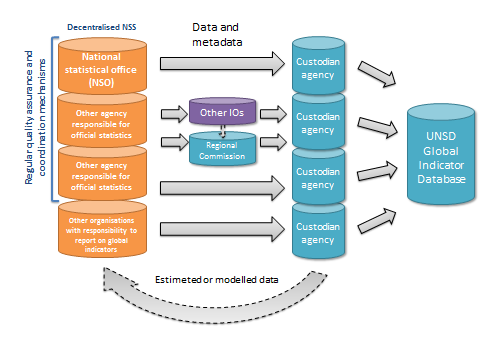
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**Figure 3: Centralised model. The NSO is a coordinator and validator of all SDG indicators**

1. In a centralised model for SDG indicator reporting, the NSO will typically collect and store all indicator data to a centrally held database, apply a mechanism for validating the data collected and send or otherwise make available the indicators to the custodian agencies and other users. This model could be applied to all indicators, or be limited to the statistical ones only.
2. Closely associated with this model is the notion of accountability, quality assurance and coordinated accessibility, a one-stop-shop for SDG data. The most important precondition for the model to be efficient is that the NSO has a legally recognised mandate to coordinate and validate all official statistics in the country. The model will also require resources to build and maintain the procedures for collecting, validating and disseminating the global SDG indicators. If this is not already an integral part of the NSOs operations, it could prove costly.

## Decentralised reporting of global SDG indicators

1. In figure 4 a model of decentralised responsibilities for SDG indicator reporting is outlined.



**Figure 4: The NSO and other agencies in the country both report SDG statistics**

1. In a statistical system where responsibility for the production, development and dissemination of official statistics is dispersed over many agencies or line ministries, it could be more efficient to also decentralise the responsibility for SDG indicator reporting to the entity responsible for the statistics that makes the bases for the particular indicator. A decentralised model would be associated with the notion of “soft coordination” where the coordination body may issue guidelines and provide training and forums for exchange of experience. For this model to be efficient, the coordination needs to build on a trusted partnership between indicator owners and on a recognised mandate for the NSO for certain coordination responsibilities. This model could potentially suffer lack of overview and accessibility; therefore a set-up like this should consider ways of making SDG data accessible easily and coherently and preferably in open data format.

## “In between” models

1. The models described above are the two extremes. It is highly probable that most countries will choose a model somewhere in between. The quality assurance role of the centralised model could e.g. take different forms from acting as a “post-office” and simply making data available on NRPSs or sending it to international level, to undertaking various degrees of control, from basic validation to full quality control. The role the NSO takes will typically depend on already existing mechanisms.
2. In a decentralised model, NSOs can also apply different levels of coordination from simply keeping track of who supplies which indicators to what custodian agencies to serve as a platform/forum for discussion of issues on data collection and analysis between government agencies and international organizations on SDG indicators, keeping stakeholders abreast of and share knowledge on statistical activities in the field of data collection and analysis, organising and promoting coordination and joint advocacy activities around data collection with a specific focus on SDGs, ensure coordination of information exchange on SDG indicators, promoting substantive discussion on statistical capacity building and coordinating quality assurance activities within the national statistical system.

## Information flows from custodian agencies to countries

1. Regardless of which model is chosen, it is imperative that the information flowing from the custodian agencies back to the national statistical systems (including in the form of estimated or modelled data for validation by the country) is supporting the country led follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. Coordination and quality assurance efforts need to be supported by transparent and effective information exchange between the national and global level. [[10]](#footnote-10)
2. The custodian agencies could support the process and facilitate coordination between the national and global level by:

* providing technical guidelines regarding the expected standards of data and metadata;
* providing data collection calendars;
* providing metadata for global indicators (clear and transparent description of how indicators are calculated or/and estimated) and by;
* providing information on the approach to proxy indicators provided by countries.

# DETERMINANTS AND ARGUMENTS TO BE CONSIDERED

1. When taking the decision about a reporting model, NSOs need to assess their capabilities and limitations as well as the character of their statistical system. It is important to remember that SDGs monitoring is a long-term process so external and internal circumstances may change considerably over time. In this section of the report, some, but not necessarily all, circumstances that may affect the choice of reporting set-up are detailed.

## Degree of (de)centralisation within the statistical system

1. Different scenarios for data reporting can be envisioned dependent on the structure and organizational model of the statistical system in the country: centralised, decentralised or a combination of these.
2. In a decentralised statistical system, the reporting of the global indicators could prove to be very complex. In such cases a centralised reporting model could facilitate coordination, quality assurance and reporting and dissemination of SDG indicators and related statistics. A NRP could facilitate gathering data from different units and controlling data quality, especially when a NSO is the coordinator of national data flows (no matter it is build specifically for the purpose of SDG indicators or developed for national statistics in general). It could also serve as a mean of data dissemination and as a reporting tool.
3. On the other hand, if well-established and robust coordination mechanisms are already in place, a decentralised system may want to rely on these mechanisms rather than developing a model that is un-known and that the partners are not used to.
4. Whichever model is chosen to the reporting, it will work most effectively when all stakeholders cooperate closely and the tasks are clearly divided. A coordinator and focal point for SDGs monitoring should be established. This approach helps to avoid confusion when many institutions provide SDG indicators to the global database separately.

## The coordinating role of the NSO

1. If a country wants to collect and transmit to agencies the SDG indicators coherently, it may be a good idea that the NSO develop a platform for collection of data from other agencies/data providers.
2. If a country has a legal set-up and traditions that spreads responsibility for quality and other features of official statistics, soft coordinating tools could be most effective and efficient. A more decentralised reporting model could be implemented.
3. It is also important to consider the NSOs role vis-à-vis possible national follow-up, including perhaps specific national indicators. If the NSO coordinates, collects, compiles and disseminates national follow-up, it would be beneficial to align the global reporting to the national reporting model used.
4. The coordination role of a NSO can take different forms. Apart from choices made regarding centralised reporting or “soft coordination” it can also encompass different subset of the global indicators such as only the statistical indicators emanating from the system of official statistics or also include non-statistical indicators as well as non-official statistics.
5. Clear definition of the NSOs’ role related to statistics for SDGs is crucial for the decision-making concerning a reporting model. According to a survey[[11]](#footnote-11) conducted among the CES countries, over 30% of the 61 replying NSOs indicated that SDGs statistics are part of their performance in general, thus they do not need a government decision in this respect. In near 50% of countries such a decision has already been taken or is expected. And 15% of NSOs do not have their governments’ decisions.
6. In most countries NSOs have a coordination role vis-à-vis the production of official statistics. In some countries the NSO has the role of gatekeeper as regards quality and some countries practice soft coordination, i.e. the NSO provides training, common guidelines and opportunities for exchange of experience within the statistical system.
7. It is likely that the NSO will assume/be tasked with the same responsibility regarding the SDG indicators as it is regarding official statistics.

## National reporting mechanisms

1. A statistical system can use the momentum that the high demand for statistics relating to the 2030 Agenda signify, in efforts to develop e.g. dissemination practices to meet users’ needs.
2. On the other hand, a NSO that have invested heavily in uniform and standardised processes, tools and methods for collection, production and dissemination of statistics may not want to develop specialised systems, platforms or processes for SDG indicators. In a system where modern and integrated systems are in place, these could be used for example to make SDG indicators and related statistics easily and coherently accessible to different types of users.
3. For NSOs already using established tools for data reporting (e.g. databases), the best solution would probably be to adapt it for SDGs needs. It should be considered whether the extending of an existing database would give transparent results and would be more effective than developing a new database.
4. When a NSO doesn’t have one universal national reporting mechanism, it could choose more or less advanced means of SDGs data dissemination, e.g. on their websites via NRP or excel files or submitting the data by the NSO directly to the international agency (e.g. in the form of questionnaire). Whatever solution is chosen, it must keep balance between costs and added value. The costs include mainly: technical infrastructure, licenses, human skills and work time. The value could consist of anything from a simple reporting mechanism to complex data dissemination and communication with users.

## National implementation/action plan regarding SDGs

1. In some countries the government has already implemented a national action plan related to SDGs. Some intend to do this in the near future. National action plans define countries’ priorities regarding SDGs and can set national indicators for their monitoring. Such a plan usually allocates tasks in implementing SDGs and indicates the unit responsible for the monitoring process.
2. A majority of countries (near 70%) that replied to the CES survey are currently developing or plan to develop indicators tailored to the national context. When national SDGs indicators are set, a NSO is usually responsible for both: national monitoring as well as global SDGs reporting. It is an important argument for choosing the appropriate approach towards SDGs reporting.
3. Governments having (or planning) national action plans would expect the NSOs to provide appropriate data systematically. This usually requires assurance that there will be public access to indicators. When NSOs are obliged to disseminate indicators for national purposes, they could decide to add global indicators and publish them together. One means of data dissemination could be used in such cases to monitor the national action plan and to report global SDG indicators.

## Quality assurance mechanisms

1. As noted in the Road Map on statistics for SDGs, ensuring appropriate mechanisms for data validation and quality control is essential. Most NSOs have developed quality assurance frameworks that guide the development and production of official statistics.[[12]](#footnote-12) These national frameworks are generally aligned with regional and global quality assurance frameworks—such as the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, the UNECE CES standards, and the OECD Good Statistical Practice guidelines and the Code of Practice for European statistics for the EU member states.
2. For data from other sources, the agency responsible for the production of official statistics do not have the authority to apply quality assurance mechanisms directly (such as during the collection of the data). In these cases, it is essential that the responsible agency review and document the data quality and the methods used to produce the data. This effort, sometimes known as “curation”, is especially important when agencies intend to use lesser known data sources to produce official statistics.
3. It may be instructive for NSOs to consider “fitness for use” as a guide to determining acceptable quality assurance for national reporting for global SDG indicators and the construction of global statistics. A discussion with national policy makers regarding the intended use of SDG indicator statistics, and the stakes associated with them, could assist NSOs with determining the level of quality assurance that is necessary for reporting purposes. This may be especially helpful in managing expectations and use regarding some non-traditional areas for statistical measurement whose methodology is not as well developed as more traditional areas, while still encouraging participation in producing prototype estimates. Additionally, establishing fitness for use guidelines with policy makers would assist in prioritising statistical capacity building according to national needs.
4. For many of the SDG indicators in the Global indicator framework, data will come from the NSO. For example data for the indicators related to GDP growth, earnings and employment are likely produced in the NSO. These data have gone through the appropriate vetting and quality assurance standards. Other data will be produced by other entities within the countries system of official statistics. For these data, quality assurance are usually in place, whether through the producers own quality assurance mechanisms or by those provided by the NSO. Yet other data will be produced by others outside of the national system of official statistics. What role the NSO plays in the assurance of the quality of statistics from other sources will depend first and foremost on the NSOs role within the public administration.

# CONCLUSIONS

1. A well-organised reporting model at the national level, which fits specific national circumstances, is crucial for effective monitoring of SDGs. Discussing a reporting model to be adopted, a country considers many arguments, essentially: different needs for data (national users’ needs, global reporting requirements), the role of NSOs, the set-up of statistical system, national practices and capabilities.
2. Whatever mechanisms for national and international reporting are chosen, it is recommended that a **mechanism for coordination is clearly defined along with the other roles and responsibilities**. This is to assure that the best possible data is used and to avoid duplication of work. A clearly defined coordination body will be able to support the different producers in how to go about their reporting responsibility. The coordinating body could also support cooperation between stakeholders, including producers, reporting bodies and users of the indicator based follow-up of the 2030 Agenda.
3. If one body in the national statistical system is, according to legislation or other national decisions, responsible for the quality of all official statistics produced in the system, **a centralised reporting model**, including a centralised mechanism for quality checks, is the logical choice.
4. If, on the other hand, well-established and robust coordination mechanisms, including dispersed but coordinated responsibilities for e.g. quality assurance, are already in place, a decentralised system may want to rely on these mechanisms and apply **a decentralised approach to reporting** on the global SDG indicators.
5. A centralised model for reporting on the global SDG indicators could be facilitated by the use of a **NRP.** This platform could be exclusively developed for SDG monitoring or build on already available tools.
6. A NRP could also support **SDGs data dissemination**, both in terms of reporting the indicators to the custodian agencies and for making the indicators and related statistics and metadata available to other users. However, in a system where modern and integrated systems are already in place, these could be used for disseminating SDG statistics to different types of users.

1. General assembly resolution 70/1. Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Preamble) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See paragraph 74(g) in http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See paragraph 83 in <http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See Decision 47/101 (l) from the rapport of 47th UN Statistical Commission http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/47th-session/documents/Report-on-the-47th-session-of-the-statistical-commission-E.pdf. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. unstats.un.org/unsd/dnss/docViewer.aspx?docID=1804 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See OP 7 of draft resolution on the Work of the UN Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that the Statistical commission agreed to recommend for adoption by ECOSOC at its 48th session in March 2017. See also decision 1 of the report of the Statistical Commission from the same session. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The national statistical system comprises the ensemble of statistical organizations and units within a country that collect, process and disseminate official statistics on behalf of national government. The system usually operates under a statistical law. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Taken from Conference of European Statisticians report entitled, “Recommendations on Measuring Sustainable Development” <http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/publications/2013/CES_SD_web.pdf> accessed Feb. 26, 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. These definitions come from the 2009 edition of the SDMX Metadata Common Vocabulary. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. See OP 7 of draft resolution on the Work of the UN Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that the Statistical commission agreed to recommend for adoption by ECOSOC at its 48th session in March 2017. See also decision 1 of the report of the Statistical Commission from the same session. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. The CES survey on strategies and plans related to Statistics for SDGs was conducted in January 2017; 61 countries replied to the survey. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. See for example US Statistical Policy Directive 1: Responsibilities of Principal Federal Statistical Agencies and Designated Units; US Statistical Policy Directive 2: Standards and Guidelines for Federal Surveys; the US Paperwork Reduction Act; and the US Information Quality Act. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)